

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IS, XF

SUBJECT: ASHER WALLFISH DECEMBER 16 INTERVIEW WITH  
ISRAELI POLITICAL OBSERVER

1. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE, BY ASHER WALLFISH, TITLED  
"ISRAEL MUSTN'T HAGGLE OVER MAKING F-16" APPEARED IN THE  
JERUSALEM POST, DECEMBER 16.
2. BEGIN TEXT: ISRAEL MUST NOT DELAY THE FUTURE DELIVERY  
OF AMERICAN WARPLANES SCHEDULED FOR 1980-1981 BY HAGGLING  
OVER THE COMPONENTS TO BE MANUFACTURED HERE, ACCORDING TO  
A POLITICAL OBSERVER IN JERUSALEM. AS FAR AS THE AMERICAN  
AUTHORITIES ARE CONCERNED, NO DELAY IS ANTICIPATED IN THE  
DELIVERY OF THESE PLANES, THE F-16, WHICH WERE PROMISED  
IN WRITING BY THE U.S. PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER 1975, WHEN  
THE INTERIM AGREEMENT OF THE SINAI WAS SIGNED WITH EGYPT.
3. THERE IS NO BASIS TO REPORTS THAT THE U.S. IS  
NOT DELIVERING PROMISED ARMS ON SCHEDULE. THERE HAS  
BEEN NO REASSESSMENT, HE DECLARED.
4. ONCE THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION SETTLES IN, THE  
OBSERVER SAID, ISRAEL MUST HOLD A DIALOGUE WITH WASHING-  
TON AT AN EARLY STAGE AND REACH MUTUAL AGREEMENT ABOUT  
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THE FRAMEWORK OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ARABS AND ABOUT

THEIR SUBSTANCE. THE ONLY OBSTACLE LOOMING AT PRESENT IS THE NATURE OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION.

5. JERUSALEM DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PLO WILL SUCCEED IN CREATING A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE VERY QUICKLY. HOWEVER, THE PLO IS SURE TO COME UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE TO SMOOTH OFF ITS "ROUGH EDGES" AND AGREE TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338.

6. THE OBSERVER SAID THAT ISRAEL, FOR ITS PART, MUST PERSIST IN REFUSING TO TALK TO THE PLO, AND NOT ENTERTAIN THE POSSIBILITY OF A THIRD STATE FOR THE PALESTINIANS. IT WOULD BE A CRUCIAL HISTORIC ERROR FOR ISRAEL, BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY, TO TREAT THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AS AN ISSUE SEPARATE FROM JORDAN. FOR THAT REASON ISRAEL MUST ALSO REJECT THE IDEA OF A PALESTINE-ISRAEL FEDERATION OR CONFEDERATION, SUCH AS MOOTED BY SENEGALESE PRESIDENT LEOPOLD SENGHOR.

7. ISRAEL MUST SHUN THE IMPRESSION THAT IT IS SCARED OF NEGOTIATIONS IN 1977, THE OBSERVER SAID. ESPECIALLY AS FAR AS AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION IS CONCERNED, ISRAEL DARE NOT PRESENT AN IMAGE OF FEARING PEACE, WHETHER FOR TACTICAL OR FOR SUBSTANTIVE REASONS. THE FIRST STEP IS TO AGREE TO A SUITABLE NEGOTIATING PROCESS, AND ONCE THE NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN, ISRAEL MUST ARGUE ITS POSITIONS WITH EVERY TENACITY.

8. JERUSALEM EXPECTS THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO TRY AND WORK FOR AN OVERALL SOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE, AT LEAST IN THE FIRST STAGE, JERUSALEM EXPECTS IT TO LOSE AS LITTLE TIME AS POSSIBLE IN PROMOTING SOME POLITICAL PROCESS, AND TO TALK TO ISRAEL, IN PLAIN, CLEAR TERMS. IT EXPECTS THE NEW TEAM TO OPERATE IN AN INSTITUTIONALIZED AND ORGANIZED DIPLOMATIC MODE, AND AVOID THE MANIPULATIVE STYLE OF DIPLOMACY.

9. THE YEAR 1977 IS FAVORABLE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, THE OBSERVER BELIEVED, AND ONE OF THE MANY REASONS IS THAT ISRAEL WILL DISPOSE OF UNPRECEDENTED MILITARY MIGHT IN UNCLASSIFIED

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1977.

10. THE MILITARY STRENGTH OF SYRIA AND JORDAN HAS NOT INCREASED DRAMATICALLY SINCE 1973. THEIR AIR FORCES HAVE NOT EVEN REACHED THE YOM KIPPUR WAR LEVEL YET. RELATIVELY SPEAKING, JORDAN'S STRENGTH SHOWED THE LARGEST INCREASE. ADMITTEDLY, ARAB STATES ON THE OUTER TIER HAVE INCREASED THEIR ARMIES MUCH MORE, LIKE IRAQ AND LIBYA. BUT THE

PROBLEMS ENTAILED IN THEIR MOVING FORCES, AS WELL AS THE TIME ELEMENT, WOULD GIVE ISRAEL AMPLE WARNING IN A POSSIBLE FUTURE CONFLICT, WHERE SURPRISE IS THE KEY. THE OBSERVER DISCOUNTED THE REAL GROWTH IN OFFENSIVE MILITARY STRENGTH IN SAUDI ARABIA.

11. THE YEAR 1977 FINDS SYRIA IN AN UNENVIABLE MILITARY AND POLITICAL POSITION IN LEBANON, THE OBSERVER SAID. IN ITS CAMPAIGN TO KEEP CONTROL IN LEBANON, SYRIA CANNOT AFFORD TO MARK TIME, OR TO LOSE GROUND. IT WILL HAVE TO KEEP A SIZEABLE MILITARY PRESENCE IN LEBANON FOR THE NEXT SIX TO 18 MONTHS, IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE ITS EFFORTS THERE ARE NOT SQUANDERED. THIS MILITARY PRESENCE WILL HAVE TO FOLLOW SUCH A SCATTERED PATTERN OF DEPLOYMENT THAT IT WILL NOT OFFER ISRAEL AN IMMEDIATE OFFENSIVE THREAT.

12. MEANWHILE, SYRIA, ISRAEL AND THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE ALL CONTENT TO LET THINGS RIDE IN SOUTH LEBANON. ACCORDING TO THE OBSERVER, NO SYRIAN OR PAN-ARAB TROOPS HAVE MOVED SOUTH OF THE LINE SIDON-JEZZIN-RASHIYA-WADI. AN AREA 50 KM. WIDE HAS BEEN KEPT CLEAR IN THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL PART OF THE BORDER. AN AREA ABOUT 25 KM. WIDE HAS BEEN KEPT CLEAR OF SYRIAN AND PAN-ARAB TROOPS, NORTH OF METULLA. TERRORISTS ARE PRESENT IN THESE ZONES, AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE BEEN BUT THEY ARE NOT USING THE AREAS AS A BASE FOR OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. REPORTS OF 300-400 TERRORISTS MOVING INTO THE NORTHERN FRINGE OF FATAHLAND WERE CHECKED, AND FOUND TO BE GREATLY EXAGGERATED, THE OBSERVER NOTED. THE ONLY NEW TERRORIST PRESENCE THERE TURNED OUT TO BE A COUPLE OF TENTS AND A COUPLE OF VEHICLES, IT EMERGES.

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13. THE GENERAL TREND OF MOVEMENT IS AWAY FROM THE SOUTH. SOME 1,400 IRAQI TROOPS LEFT TYRE FOR HOME LAST MONTH, THE OBSERVER REVEALED, AND A LIBYAN BATTALION LEFT TOO. A BATTALION OF THE SYRIAN-CONTROLLED SA'EKA TERRORISTS WAS MOVED OUT OF SOUTH LEBANON TO TRIPOLI IN THE NORTH, TO HELP KEEP ORDER THERE.

14. ISRAEL, FOR ITS PART, IS PREPARED TO LIVE WITH THE VACUUM IN SOUTH LEBANON AND THE CONSEQUENT INCLARITY FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES TILL A SOVEREIGN LEBANESE FORCE IS CREATED AND SENT DOWN THERE. MEANWHILE, THE AREA CONTINUES QUIET AND THE LOCAL RESIDENTS FIND IT EASIER TO MOVE AROUND, AND EVEN TRAVEL DAILY AS FAR AS SIDON FOR WORK. END TEXT.

15. COMMENTS FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.

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